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20 April 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. William J Jorden
Senior NSC Staff Member
Executive Office Building

SUBJECT : Comments on Giap's Speech on the Role of the Militia

1. General Giap's January speech on the strategic role of guerrilla-militia forces represents another salvo in the lengthy, intra-party debate over basic military strategy in South Vietnam. It is in harmony with a number of other articles published in Hanoi since the first of the year, and while it may not constitute the final round in the polemic, it apparently reflects the current official line in Hanoi. Developments in the south in the past few months seem to be following the recommendations outlined in the speech.

2. Giap apparently is answering critics of the doctrine which he authored on the organization of armed forces for a "People's War." He is implicitly attacking those who have played down the role of the guerrilla-militia component in favor of developing main force units for mobile warfare. In typically agonising, repetitive fashion, he rehearses the full rationale for developing all three categories (main force, regional or local force, and guerrilla-militia forces) of armed forces within the context of his own "law of People's War." He emphatically declares that in all stages of resistance war, guerrilla warfare is important, and that the guerrilla-militia force, as the "core force" for guerrilla warfare, "still plays an extremely important strategic role." He is not calling for a reversion to guerrilla warfare, but for restoring the balance between mobile warfare and guerrilla warfare in the south.

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3. In stating that "underestimating the militia role is an empty, erroneous move," he is, in effect, criticising the excessive draining away of guerrilla troops and cadre in the south in favor of developing main force units. Captured documents indicate that "extraordinary" levies were placed on village guerrilla units to provide manpower to meet higher level military requirements in July 1965 and again early in 1966. Subsequent documents indicate that this produced a quantitative and qualitative decline in guerrilla-militia strength during 1966.

4. Giap describes the "development of guerrilla warfare to an increasingly high level" as "one of the main duties of our people in bringing the resistance to final victory." To achieve this, the building of guerrilla-militia forces "into an exceptionally strong and powerful force along with the reinforcement of regular and local forces" is "one of the main tasks." He asserts that strong guerrilla-militia forces are necessary to combine the political-military struggle at the grass-roots (i.e., engage the rural populace on the side of the Viet Cong), to protect and expand "liberated" areas (and, thus, to foil pacification), to inflict continuing, widespread attrition on the allied forces, and to create conditions for the effective employment of the main forces. The aim of the guerrilla-militia elements is to tie down the allied forces, spread them thinly, wear down their strength, and weaken their morale, thus providing opportunities for the main forces to "deal the enemy strong blows and to destroy his important military forces."

5. This strategic line adheres to that outlined in Giap's book, "People's War, People's Army," which was published in 1961, and is parrotted in General Hoang Minh Thao's article on "The Party Line on Building People's Armed Forces" published in Hanoi in February. The latter states that the building of guerrilla-militia forces in the south "has not yet kept up with the developing war's requirements," and he calls for the quantitative and qualitative strengthening of these forces. In pushing this particular doctrinal line, Giap and Thao have the weight of the Party's previous success against the French on their side. In his book, Giap reviewed the difficulties which the Viet Minh encountered in maintaining a correct balance between mobild warfare and guerrilla warfare in the struggle against the French.

> "Once mobild warfare appeared on the battlefront of guerrilla war, there must be close and correct coordination between these forms of fighting... On the one hand, guerrilla warfare had to be extended to make full use of the new favorable conditions brought about by mobile warfare, in order to coordinate with mobile warfare to

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wear out and annihilate a great number of enemy manpower and through these successes continue to step up mobile warfare. On the other hand, mobile warfare had to be accelerated to annihilate big enemy manpower, and concurrently, create new favorable conditions for a further extension of guerrilla warfare..."

As mobile warfare expanded, guerrilla warfare "moved back from the main position to a lesser but still important one." Giap sums up by stating, "the conduct of the war must maintain a correct ratio between the fighting forms."

6. Now, seven years later, Giap is reiterating his own dogma and exhorting the forces in the south to mend their ways and to find and maintain that "correct ratio." Judging from events in the south in the past two months, the enemy there is coming closer to a mix more favorable to his fortunes.

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